



To: the Members of the Town Council

March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010

From: Fotini Martin

As a long time Landlord in Mansfield I would like to express my thoughts with regards to the:

Proposed changes by Town Officials, especially with changing the definition of family.

I sincerely wonder as to what has driven the town officials to come to this drastic conclusion that in my opinion, as well as other landlords that have expressed their views on the subject, I see no way that they will accomplish their goal, their goal being a more peaceful Mansfield.

This is a University Town, we deal with young people that have chosen UCONN as their learning Institution. I have housed hundreds of those students over the last 15 years and I would like to share some of my experience with you. It is not the quantity of the students living in one house but I found it to be the character of each individual, where they are coming from, back ground, upbringing etc. therefore, imposing the regulation of max 3 rather than 4 will not make a difference regarding noise, partying and so on.

Another issue that concerns me greatly is the financial aspect. The town officials are controlling my income by eliminating the full use of my properties even though the taxes and fees are added each year. Cost of living goes up but my income decreases. The Town officials expect their income to increase each year due to the cost of living but not mine or any other Landlord in the Town of Mansfield.

This is a regulation that takes freedom and enterprise away from some but not from all. It is not Democratic , it reminds me of my young days when my country was occupied by the Gestapo. This is America. The land of freedom, equality for all but not here in our town???????

Thank you for listening

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fotini Martin". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Fotini Martin

265 Storrs Road

Mansfield

860-423-4707

Bob Hannafin  
398 Gurleyville Rd  
Storrs, CT

Open Letter to the Mansfield Town Council - March 1, 2010

Dear Council Members:

This letter is to express my opposition to the actions contemplated by the CCQL, in particular the proposal to limit the number of unrelated occupants from 4 to 3. This is a fairly radical action that purports to address the "quality of life in residential neighborhoods and general blight issues in town." At issue is not the spirit of the recommendations, but the lack of clarity around the problem they are trying to solve. And lacking a clear understanding of the problem, how then can we evaluate the merits of the proposed solution, or even know if that solution, when implemented, had the desired effect? There are certainly legitimate anecdotal stories and personal accounts about real and troubling episodes, but very little hard statistical data has been presented that either accurately define the problem or quantify the magnitude of it. In fact, the actual recorded data published by the town and UConn's Division of Student Affairs (number of complaints to UConn and to police, etc.), indicate that the problem is relatively small and is isolated to a few houses in a few neighborhoods.

I am not suggesting we don't have a real problem. We do. However, I propose that we state the problem into a clear and measurable goal, which will hopefully lead to a more targeted and surgical strategy. The "blight" problem seems to manifest in just a few neighborhoods where approximately 10-20 so called "party houses" exist. If we can agree that this is in fact the problem we are addressing, it takes the conversation in a completely different direction. Solving *that* problem does not call for the sweeping changes proposed.

*The problem, the proposed remedy, and consequences of that remedy*

Let's assume we have 15 party houses, and that those landlords have little or no regard for the law or their neighbors. That means that of the roughly 300 rental houses in town, we have a problem with 5 % of the properties. Let's further assume that by and large the 285 other rental homes are owned by responsible, law abiding landlords, who limit non related occupants to 4, take care of the property, and respond promptly to any complaints. In other words, they *already* comply with the laws and ordinances in place. If you change the ordinances, these law abiding owners will likely continue to comply. But why would you assume that 15 or so landlords who disregard the current laws would suddenly start to comply to more stringent ones? These changes would effectively punish the vast majority of law-abiding landlords and do nothing to fix the blight problem you set out to remedy. Further, these changes will have the following unintended economic consequences:

1. Home values -- all home values -- will drop. Investors support home prices. When the price of a home reaches a certain point, where the cash flow makes sense, they buy it. Reducing the number of unrelated occupants from 4 to 3, will discourage investors from buying homes in Mansfield. With those buyers removed from the buying pool, prices will drop. It is a matter of supply and demand.
2. Rents will rise. Supply is already tight with current UConn enrolment. Reducing (or capping) supply of rental units coupled with projected enrolment increases will provide fewer options for more renters.

I appreciate the recent action taken by the Council to encourage civility among citizens who present during public forum. It is in this spirit that I ask for a more civil dialogue around the present issue. It was intimated several times at the CCQL meeting I attended that landlords who choose *not* rent to students do so out of concern for their neighbors. Such seemingly innocent statements, however unintentionally, imply or insinuate that those who *do* rent to students must not have the same regard for their neighbors. That is patently false. It is no more true to suggest that those who choose not rent to students do so simply because they can afford not to, and don't want the extra work and maintenance, rather than out of any genetic benevolence toward their neighbors. Neither characterization is warranted or particularly helpful in public discourse when resolving this serious issue.

Finally, this discourse is important and healthy, but it sometimes gets shrill and irrational, driven too often by "general understandings" and anecdotal data. And at times (though to the committee's credit, not frequently) it is given to broad characterizations about all UConn students. At the risk of preaching to the choir, I remind us all that these are good kids, most of whom are living on their own for the first time. Sure, they make mistakes. But the vast majority are fine law-abiding young men and women who both respect and contribute to our community. They deserve to be treated with the same consideration we give to all of our citizens.

Thanks for the fine work you do for our town, and thanks for considering my perspective. Respectfully submitted - Bob Hannafin

Bob Hannafin  
398 Gurleyville Rd  
Storrs, CT

Open Letter to the CCQL Members - March 1, 2010

Dear CCQL Members:

This letter is to express my concern about the membership (composition) of the CCQL. I believe there is a potential that undue influence can be exerted by one member over another. If my information is correct, Mr Briody is employed in the same Division of Student Affairs at UConn as Mr. Hintz. Even though they do not work in the same functional department within Student Affairs (Hintz is Director of Off Campus Housing, Briody is Associate Director of Leadership Development), they are not peers within Student Affairs, i.e., one outranks the other according to the university's HR guidelines. So my concern is that the senior member may exert unintended influence on his colleague's views and votes. It is important to understand that it doesn't really matter whether or not we believe this to actually be the case. The question is whether a disinterested third party would think there is a reasonable chance that one has influence over the other. It is also important to state that neither I nor anyone else is questioning the motives or any actions of either of these fine men - and I laud their public service. We need more citizens willing to serve.

Thus, in the interest of equity and fairness, I propose that either Mr. Briody or Mr Hintz consider recusing himself from this committee.

Respectfully submitted - *Bob Hannafin*

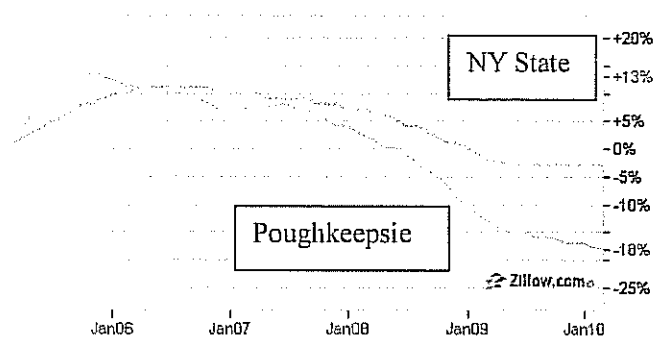
3/3/2010  
Jake Friedman  
65 Northwood Rd.  
Storrs, CT

**Letter to the Committee for Community Quality of Life (CCQL)**

First, I'd like to request that the minutes for the Feb. 4, 2010 meeting be corrected to include comments from three members of the public. By my notes, Andy Kabalo, Roger Nielson and Brian Coleman all spoke in opposition to the Committee's proposed actions to date. Also omitted are all comments from the second public comment section, where many members of the public raised concerns about or opposition to the items that were discussed during the meeting.

The agenda for the CCQL March 4, 2010 meeting includes a discussion of a new proposed Definition of Family. There are multiple issues with this draft (as described in the last CCQL meeting), but most concerning is the proposed reduction of "number of unrelated occupants" from its current 4 to 3. I oppose the draft, since it is inappropriate for the character of our town, would place undue hardship on Mansfield residents and landlords and would not address the issues of concern to this Committee. Please consider these three points described in further detail here.

Much has been made of the "Poughkeepsie Model" in the proposal to change our housing/zoning code and it is Poughkeepsie's Definition of Family upon which this draft is based. Poughkeepsie is a city with more than ten times the population density of our rural town. It's hard for one to imagine how their approach can be germane to our issues. Moreover, the **majority** of Poughkeepsie's housing comes from rentals<sup>i</sup>. The actions that the CCQL takes should be for the purpose of bolstering home values in town. Consider Poughkeepsie's experience here. As shown in the chart below (percent change in average home value vs. time), the city's average home value has dropped by ~20% since 2005, versus a ~4% drop for the State of NY<sup>ii</sup>. I don't pretend that the Definition of Family is the only factor in setting home values, but if restrictions such as this were supposed to help blunt any drop in home values, the data suggests that they have not worked. Instead, the ability to rent a home should set the minimum price that buyers will pay for that home and this is directly tied to the number of unrelated occupants that the town allows. Dropping this number likely drops the floor of the average single family home's value, especially in towns where many tenants tend to be unrelated (such as students).



Carolyn Newcombe's letter to the Town Council (Feb. 8, 2010 packet and attached) describes the type of hardships that will be forced upon your neighbors, should you see this restriction through. In short, reducing the income potential of homes will force homeowners "underwater," unable to cover mortgage payments. During the worst economic climate in decades and a real estate market that has seen values drop in unprecedented ways, it will be difficult for your neighbors and landlords to unwind their financial positions.

The proposed Definition of Family does not address the actual issue at hand. Since early 2009, this committee has been repeatedly reminded by staff and members that the issue at hand is one of behavior<sup>iii</sup>. Four unrelated occupants per unit is quite a reasonable number for homes in our town and does not beget rowdy behavior. Tenant behaviors should be addressed in the same way that non-tenant behaviors should: via direct communication and education and enforcing existing rules when necessary. Students in particular can and should be properly informed of their rights and responsibilities as valued members of our community. This Committee should facilitate direct communication between the various stakeholders to address behavior and nuisance issues- for example, by following up on specific incidences that our neighbors bring to it (a small number to date). In the meantime, I request that the Committee make a motion and recommend that the Definition of Family be kept to its current 4 unrelated residents and request a Public Hearing to vet any other concerns with the revised draft. Finally, I'd like to remind the Committee that its meeting minutes since 2004 show more public opposition to the various planned restrictions and ordinances than support for them.

Sincerely,

Jake Friedman

<sup>i</sup> <http://www.city-data.com/housing/houses-Poughkeepsie-New-York.html>

<sup>ii</sup> [http://www.zillow.com/homedetails/charts/30133376\\_zpid,5years\\_chartDuration/](http://www.zillow.com/homedetails/charts/30133376_zpid,5years_chartDuration/)

<sup>iii</sup> JFried: 4/2009, CHirsch: 6/2009, MNinteanu: 6/2009, JFried: 12/2009

**Town of Mansfield  
Town Council  
February 4, 2010**

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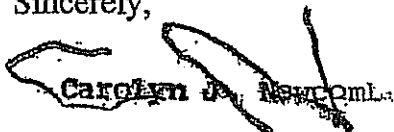
To Members of the Town Council,

I would like to express my opposition to changes in the proposed town housing code. I own two properties in the Town of Mansfield. My 116 Courtyard Lane is a rental property which is usually rented to UConn students on a yearly basis. This condo has three bedrooms and could easily house four persons. In fact I recently had a potential renter for the upcoming year who was interested in having four students occupy the condo. It is my understanding this would violate the proposed changes to the housing code. I have to wonder if this propose change is intended to limit the off campus housing to UConn students I thought there is not enough housing on campus.

In May 2008 I bought the house at 648 Storrs Road with Jason and Becky Sabo. This is a single family house which has an efficiency apartment attached to it which is my residence. Do to unforeseen circumstances, the Sabo family has moved and in order to make mortgage payment I'm renting out rooms. Currently the renters consist of two marred couple and a UConn graduate student.. This makes four unrelated people in the house.. So I would be in violation of the potential housing code. Right now I can't sell the house due to court proceeding. If I was to sell the house, I would probably table a loss.

In summary, the proposed housing code changes would restrict the housing stock and generally negatively affect the housing market in Mansfield.

Sincerely,



Carolyn J. Newcombe

Carolyn Newcombe  
648 Storrs Road  
Storrs - Mansfield, CT 06268

Att: Mike Nuteau

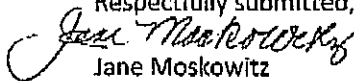
3/4/10

I ask that the following be considered in discussions of how to deal with rental properties in Storrs, CT to maintain the integrity of the community.

1. Do not make rules you cannot enforce. I was signing a lease last night and the brother of the prospective tenant told me there were 6 people in his house, his landlord knew, and when the inspector came they managed to hide it and were not caught. A month or so ago a young man called me looking for a house and asked if they could have five. When I told him that was illegal he told me his landlord did it and asked if I wanted to know how so I could do it. Most houses have the capacity for 4 bedrooms. If you limit it to 3 people they will put someone in the 3<sup>rd</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> bedroom anyway. An empty bedroom is an invitation for these kids.
2. Of course, people bought these properties with a financial plan based on current law. Please grandfather existing houses if you change the law.
3. Make sure each property has a manager living in Storrs. This manager should be registered with the Town, with name and phone number available. Refer all calls to the property manager. I pay \$13.00 to register my property in Manhattan, NY so I would assume it would not be more here.
4. Form a volunteer committee of concerned landlords who must meet once a month to monitor complaints. Then at least we would know first hand exactly what the complaints are, who the landlords are and we could work with the existing office at UCONN to deal with this. Let the 'good' landlords have a chance to see what they can do.
5. Target one area of town each ¼ or so, and use the many existing laws we have, like blight or noise laws and hammer those areas, making an example with heavy fines. If the word gets out that the Town is monitoring rentals and fines must be paid then all landlords will be more attentive to their properties. Fine the tenants!
6. Have a mandatory lease made up by the Town that all landlords must use and file with the Town. For example, I write in my leases that parties are not allowed and I define a party by a certain number of people. This lease would include parking restrictions etc. If the tenants are in violation of the lease more than one time (you should get one warning) then the landlord must evict them and a heavy fine must be levied against the students. Force parents to co-sign.
7. Make it mandatory that each landlord leave his/her name, address and phone number with the neighbors. I am pretty sure if a landlord or property manager gets constant calls, Sunday mornings at 6 AM, Saturday nights at 3 AM, he or she will control the tenants.

I am sure I could think of many other things that might address this problem in a reasonable way. We need to start a little more slowly. If measures like these, or better one that I am sure people will suggest do not work of course you will have no choice but to strong arm landlords in order to maintain the integrity of our Town. I surely would be in favor of a 2 year trial program, and if it does not work, what choice does the Town have?

Respectfully submitted,

  
Jane Moskowitz